

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

volume 3/2,3

winter 1973

page

97

leo strauss

note on the plan of nietzsche's
beyond good and evil

114

alexandre kojève

the idea of death in the philosophy
of hegel

157

muhsin mahdi

remarks on the *1001 nights*

169

larry peterman

an introduction to dante's *de monarchia*

191

larry l. adams

edmund burke: the psychology of
citizenship

205

nathan rotenstreich

human emancipation and revolution

221

walter b. mead

christian ambiguity and social disorder



martinus nijhoff, the hague

edited at

queens college of the city university
of new york

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

volume 3

issue 2,3

editors

seth g. benardete - howard b. white
hilail gildin *executive editor*

consulting editors

john hallowell - wilhelm hennis erich hula - michael oakeshott leo
strauss · kenneth w. thompson

interpretation is a journal devoted to the study of political philosophy.
it appears three times a year.

its editors welcome contributions from all those who take
a serious interest in political philosophy regardless of their orientation.

all manuscripts and editorial correspondence
should be addressed to the executive editor

interpretation

jefferson hall 312 - queens college - flushing, n.y. 11367 - u.s.a.

subscription price

for institutions and libraries Guilders 36.— - for individuals Guilders 28.80
one guilder = ab. \$ 0.37

subscription and correspondence in connection
therewith should be sent to the publisher

martinus nijhoff

9-11 lange voorhout - p.o.b. 269 - the hague - netherlands.

AN INTRODUCTION TO DANTE'S *DE MONARCHIA*

LARRY PETERMAN

De Monarchia is the most "orderly and complete" expression of Dante's political thought.¹ Moreover, the treatise is justly famous as an early and coherent proposal for world government or world empire. *De Monarchia* may be studied as more than a footnote to the *Divine Comedy*. For a political scientist, it is informative in at least two respects. First, it indicates how a great Christian Aristotelian dealt with the principal medieval political problem, the question of the proper relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authorities, i.e., emperor and pope. Second, it is an introduction to problems and questions that can guide us to a greater understanding of later and more popular theories of world government and empire.

This essay is an introduction, in the main, to the first of these concerns. We shall consider how *De Monarchia* provides a new approach to political affairs. World government is a "novel" resolution of the medieval political problem. Its necessity is proven by recourse to a political end that is unconventional both with respect to Aristotelianism and Christianity. Its argument, in turn, offers a new order of political priorities, especially with regard to Dante's acknowledged master, Aristotle. Yet we shall see that Dante does not depart completely from Aristotle. His non-Aristotelian political formulations are the consequence of effects that Christianity and the Christian church had upon political life. He remains true to Aristotle, however, in suggesting how world government might resolve political difficulties that were coeval with the Christian effect upon politics. Dante thus steers a cautious course between Aristotelianism and Christianity, while ultimately returning to the classical tradition to support his resolution.

The scope and content of Dante's political thought is our primary concern. While acknowledging the importance of *De Monarchia* with respect to

¹ Michele Barbi, *Life of Dante* (Berkeley, 1954), p. 56; A. P. d'Entrèves, *Dante as a Political Thinker* (Oxford, 1952), p. 42. The position of *De Monarchia* in the Dantean corpus is still disputed. There remains a view that the book was an "occasional" work, the impractical vision of a man who had lost touch with political reality. Cf. Allan Gilbert, "Had Dante Read the POLITICS of Aristotle," *PMLA*, Vol. 43, 1928, p. 605; Donald Nicholl, *Monarchy and Three Political Letters* (London, 1954), p. vii; Charles T. Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Oxford, 1957), p. 170; George Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (New York, 1961), pp. 257-58; Lee McDonald, *Western Political Theory* (New York, 1968), pp. 170, 174-75.

understanding later arguments for empire and world government, we must first understand the issue of world government itself within the context in which it appears in Dante's own political thinking.² The present essay is an attempt to elucidate that political teaching.

I

Both the purpose of *De Monarchia* and its most intriguing problems are suggested in its opening lines. There Dante acknowledges each generation's debt to its ancestors and, in turn, urges his fellows to work for the benefit of future generations.³ This theme provides the impetus for *De Monarchia*. It also indicates how Dante's beneficence to his descendants is tied to the things he himself had inherited. Following Dante's own admonition, students of *De Monarchia* need consider how Dante's political philosophy is beholden to the Christian and Aristotelian traditions to which Dante was heir.⁴ They must attempt to understand Dante's demonstration

² This discussion will avoid some of the principal problems of *De Monarchia*. Very little will be said here about the alleged Averroism of the treatise or about Dante's use of the idea of the "possible intellect," which is the basis of that charge. Nor will Dante's reliance upon Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in his argument be considered, except where it is absolutely necessary. Finally, while there will be some suggestion of *De Monarchia's* relevance to subsequent political thinking, there will be no consistent attempt to treat this question. The question is, of course, central to political scientists, but before considering it, one must first be introduced to *De Monarchia*. For an indication of how some commentators have understood Dante in terms of later political thought, see Charles McIlwain, who contrasts Dante with Machiavelli, *The Growth of Political Thought in the West* (New York, 1932), p. 275, and J. N. Figgis, who mentions *De Monarchia* in the context of the development of the theory of sovereignty in the middle ages, *The Divine Right of Kings* (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 57 ff.

³ *De Monarchia* I.i.1. All reference to the treatise is to the Ricci edition of the Società Dantesca Italiana, 1968. Translations of the original Latin, unless otherwise noted, are from the Nicholl translation already cited. The idea that each generation is indebted to its forebears is not, of course, original in Dante. For a consideration of the medieval perspective, see Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (London, 1950), p. 388.

⁴ The degree to which Dante was influenced by various strains of classical and Christian traditions is, perhaps, the most compelling concern for modern Dante scholars. This problem is itself part of a greater question concerning the manner in which classical, including Arabic, and Christian viewpoints met in the middle ages. A recent survey of the literature on this subject is offered by Fernand Van Steenberghen, *La Philosophie au XIII^e Siècle* (Louvain, 1966), pp. 1-33, *passim*. The notion that the attitude taken toward Aristotle is central to understanding any particular thinker or school of the age is a principal feature of this literature. Cf. P. Mandouret, *Siger de Brabant et l'averroïsme latin au XIII^e siècle* (Fribourg, 1899), ch.II. Among the commentators upon Dante's handling of the two traditions, Etienne Gilson is most helpful in emphasizing the gulf between classical and

of what he calls "truths that no one else has considered" in terms of the piety and reverence Dante expresses toward intellectual and spiritual forebears.⁵ At the outset of his treatise, in other words, Dante warns us that an understanding of his gift to the future may ultimately depend upon understanding his debt to his ancestors.

The particular truth that *De Monarchia* reveals and demonstrates "for the benefit of the world" is temporal world monarchy.⁶ This form of government will provide the peace (*pax*) and happiness (*beatitudo*) that are missing, Dante says, in his time. In effect, *De Monarchia* suggests a secular world government that would be the secular counterpart of ecclesiastical world government as a solution to medieval political ills.⁷ The degree to which this idea is truly innovative remains an issue of considerable scholarly debate, but Dante's claim to uniqueness in advancing it is virtually unqualified.⁸ In terms of the traditions to which he is heir, temporal monarchy has neither been discovered nor properly considered before. He explains that this neglect of "the most beneficial yet most neglected of all these other beneficial but obscure truths" is the consequence of the fact that considering it leads to no immediate reward.⁹ Among undiscovered

Christian philosophy, *Dante et la Philosophie* (Paris, 1939), pp. 212 ff. Gilson's emphasis, however, seems to lead him to suggest that Dante separated the political and spiritual realms almost totally. This, as I shall attempt to show below, is an oversimplification inasmuch as Dante recognized the very close connection between the two realms. There are, on the other hand, commentators who seem to take too little account of the differences between Aristotelianism and Christianity. Thus A. P. d'Entrèves notes Dante's debt to Aristotle and Thomas, yet fails to consider the degree of incompatibility in the two views. Dante's view of the state and "the nature of politics are derived from the Thomist, and indeed from the Aristotelian teaching, and remained faithful to it down to the end." *Op. cit.*, p. 15, my emphasis. Other analyses of the same question with regard to Dante's political thought can be found in Paul Renucci, *Dante: Disciple et Juge du Monde Gréco-Latin* (Paris, 1954), pp. 269 ff.; Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 459 ff. The date of *De Monarchia* is still somewhat doubtful but Colin Hardie's arguments for 1309-10 are persuasive. See Nicholl, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-21.

⁵ *De Mon.* I.i.3, xvi.5, II.i.6-8, III.iii.18, xv.18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I. i. 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I.iv.2. In arguing for a world government, Dante moves beyond Thomas' acceptance of papal plenitude of power and toward Marsilius' anticlericalism. Gierke's *Political Theories of the Middle Ages*, F. W. Maitland trans. (Cambridge, 1951), remains one of the most concise and accessible accounts of the various theories of church-state relations during the middle ages.

⁸ Gilson, *Dante et la philosophie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 164, 222, 229; Barbi, *op. cit.*, p. 57; Kantorowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 452-53; Nicholl, *op. cit.*, pp. viii-ix; d'Entrèves, *op. cit.*, pp. 44 ff.; Gierke, *op. cit.*, notes 4-8.

⁹ *De Mon.* I.i.5, III.iii.18. Dante's claim to breaking new ground recalls similar claims in Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Compare *De Mon.* I.i.3, 5, with *The Prince*, Epistle Dedicatory and Ch. XV.

ered truths in general, temporal monarchy in particular has been neglected because of selfishness.

Not all undiscovered truths are a consequence of selfishness, however. Dante speaks of philosophers who attempt to make the human situation clear, undeterred by passion, and, in particular, lauds Aristotle, who even "urges us to abandon friendship for the sake of truth." Thus it is not an urge for private benefit alone that explains why some truths are neglected. Those who do neglect truth for such reasons Dante reveals as primarily his Christian opponents who "boast of being defenders of the Christian faith" yet lead men from the truth for the sake of their own greed.¹⁰ There is a dichotomy between pre-Christians, who had not discovered the truth about temporal monarchy because they had no access to it, and Christians, who have access to it but have neglected it because of their greed. Christianity, as Dante presents the situation, opens the way to truths unknowable to the ancients and gives rise to men who refuse to recognize that which they could know.¹¹ *De Monarchia*, therefore, enlarges upon Aristotelian political thought by way of that which was unavailable to Aristotle and unveils what Dante's Christian fellows might know if they did not squander their God-given talents and possibilities. *De Monarchia*'s proposal of temporal world government is a response to the limitations of antiquity and the faults of its own age.

The extension beyond Aristotle is readily apparent. Temporal monarchy, a single authoritative government (*principatus*) encompassing the entire world and all its inhabitants, radically enlarges and alters the Aristotelian *polis*. While Aristotle recognized empires of enormous size and power—notably Persia—he did not view them as actually or potentially the best form of human association. It was rather the *polis* that provided the necessities of life and the opportunity to live well, and was the basis of any good regime. But the *polis* did such things only in consequence of limiting the size of the community, i.e., of keeping the number of citizens relatively small. For Aristotle, opportunities for the kind of rule and citizenship required for the best regime are impossible in any association larger than the *polis*, let alone in a world empire.¹²

These limitations, however, no longer govern *De Monarchia*'s political universe because of what Aristotle could not have known. There is, Dante says, a human end that is unsatisfiable by the *polis*, an end that is realized

¹⁰ *De Mon.* III.i.3, II.x.1, Cf. I.i.5,xvi.5, III,iii.7ff., III.xv.9, *Inferno* IV.31, *Paradiso* XVII.106-20, *Convivio*, I.ix.

¹¹ This view seems to parallel Marsilius' approach to Aristotle. Cf. *The Defender of Peace*, Alan Gewirth trans. (New York, 1956), I.i.3; Leo Strauss, *Marsilius of Padua*, in *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago, 1963), p. 228.

¹² See *Nic. Eth.* 1170b20 ff., *Pol.* 1260b37 ff., 1265a19 ff., 1319b1 ff. The expansion upon the Aristotelian *polis* in *De Monarchia* is recognized by virtually all students of *De Monarchia*. See W. H. V. Reade's introduction to the Oxford edition of *De Monarchia* (Oxford, 1916), p. x.

only through the concerted and unified efforts of all men. Inasmuch as this universal human end arises out of a Christian view of creation, knowledge of it would have been unavailable prior to the advent of Christianity.

... the end towards which the individual's life is directed is different from that of the family community; the village has one end, the city another, and the kingdom yet another; and last of all there is the end that the eternal God has established for the whole human race (*universaliter genus humanum*) by means of nature, which is the mode of his art... the first point to realize is that 'God and nature never do anything in vain', for whatever is brought into existence has some purpose to serve... there must be some particular function proper to the human species as a whole and for which the whole species in its multitudinous variety was created; this function is beyond the capacity of any one man or household or village, or even of any one city or kingdom.¹³

There is, in short, a human end in keeping with the idea of a universal creator that calls for a world government for its realization. Only in a world government can the human species as a whole come together so as to satisfy divine intention. The proposition that the human race was divinely created with a proper end for the *genus* as a whole is, then, the basis of Dante's departure from Aristotle.¹⁴ The argument that world

¹³ *De Mon.* I.iii.2-4, Compare with *Pol.* 1252a25; *De caelo* 1252b13 ff. Dante's emphasis on purposeful being is not in itself, of course, foreign to the classical tradition as Aristotle expounded it. The correspondence of this passage to the passage in *De caelo* is evidence of that. However, in offering a purpose for the human race as a whole, Dante does break new ground.

¹⁴ Ultimately, the issue of *De Monarchia* is the relationship between the Christian view of being and creation and the view that Aristotle presents in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. In a very serious sense, the central propositions of *De Monarchia* are founded upon the *Metaphysics* rather than Aristotle's political works. [The most numerous references by name to the Aristotelian corpus in *De Monarchia* are the *Nicomachean Ethics* (eleven), the *Politics* (six), and the *Metaphysics* (six).] For example, the argument for unity of the human race relies almost wholly upon the *Metaphysics*. The proposition that within each kind of being the best is that which is most one, upon which that argument rests, is explicitly borrowed from the *Metaphysics*. However, Dante takes liberties with Aristotle. Immediately after noting the relation of unity and goodness, he suggests that Aristotle seems to agree with the Pythagorean correlations that place unity on the side of goodness and multiplicity on the side of evil. But he does this without mentioning Aristotle's qualification of the Pythagorean position. *De Mon.* I.xv.2, *Meta.* 986a23-27, 1021b30 ff., 1052a1 ff. Again, the discussion of the relationship between pope and emperor begins by way of the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle's idea that all things are reducible to one component is the focus through which one must understand the "regulative principle to which they [pope and emperor] are reducible." It is clear that an understanding of what Aristotle means in offering the "one" as the first measure of things, and how Dante adopts that view, is crucial to understanding the basis of Dante's political thought. *De Mon.* III.xi.1 ff., 7, *Meta.* 1052b18. Cf. *Nic. Eth.* 1173a26, 1176a17, Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 108 ff.

government or empire is the best kind of government and the condition of earthly well-being is itself conditioned on acceptance of a Christian perspective, i.e., on truth unknown to Aristotle and the ancients.

The divine universal human end that is the key to Dante's divergence from Aristotle also distinguishes him from his Christian opponents.¹⁵ The human end *De Monarchia* proposes is an intellectual potential that is actualized only when all men share it.

... that potentiality cannot wholly and at once be translated into action by one man, or by any of the particular communities... mankind has to be composed of a multitude through which this entire potentiality can be actualized.¹⁶

It is not our purpose here to consider in any depth the notion of the possible intellect. We need only recognize that it bears out Dante's claim that he is demonstrating new truth. With respect to conventional Christian doctrine, the argument for the possible intellect led to charges of Averroism being laid against him. Basically, there were two reasons for this. First, Dante was accused of suggesting a kind of universal earthly salvation that replaces Christianity's heavenly salvation. Second, that the intellectual potential is realized only by a multitude seemed to promise a mode of salvation contrary to Christian emphasis on individual salvation. In accusing Dante of Averroism, in other words, papalists pointed both to the finality and the commonality of the human end as portrayed in *De Monarchia*. Guido Vernani, whose *De Reprobatione Monarchie*, written at the behest of Pope John XXII, was the principal papalist reply to *De Monarchia*, did not temporize in accusing Dante of:

... assigning a separate form of beatitude to corruptible man, who can have neither virtue nor beatitude properly so called; with regarding man, in consequence, as being destined by God for this beatitude, conceived as a final goal distinct from heavenly beatitude.¹⁷

¹⁵ Pope John XXII ordered the book burned in Bologna in 1329. Its influence seems to have remained, however, for it was placed upon the Index in 1554 and not removed until the nineteenth century. Bartolus of Sassoferrato (1314-1357) tells us that "after his death Dante was almost condemned for Heresy" on account of his opinion that the empire was independent of the papacy. C. N. S. Woolf, *Bartolus of Sassoferrato: His Position in the History of Medieval Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1913), p. 90. Even those commentators who seem to doubt the uniqueness of *De Monarchia* in other respects agree that the universal human community and its universal end were unconventional notions for Dante's time. See d'Entrèves, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-47.

¹⁶ *De Mon.* I.iii.8.

¹⁷ This is Gilson's paraphrase of Vernani's statement of summation. *Dante et la philosophie, op. cit.*, p. 233. The question of Dante's Averroism is a thorny one. Dante did not help his case, in any event, by noting that "Averroes agrees with this opinion in his commentary on *De Anima*." *De Mon.* I.iii.9. It does seem unquestionable that Dante agrees with Averroes on the existence of an intellectual substance separable from

De Monarchia's claim to novelty is justified both in Aristotelian and Christian terms. The final earthly end it posits is more comprehensive than any visualized by Aristotle or conventional Christian theologians. World empire, seen in context of *De Monarchia*, answers a political need that had not hitherto been compelling in political affairs. The universal human community (*humana civilitas*) in which the divinely instituted end of man is actualized is possible only through world government. Empire had been considered and defended before, but Dante presents its necessity and function in a new light.¹⁸

II

The concept of world government not only expands the boundaries of the Aristotelian *polis* but does so at considerable cost to other Aristotelian political ideas. Aristotle's view of the best political life assumes a kind of political excellence or virtue which is hardly possible under world government. According to *De Monarchia*, opportunity remains for political prudence (*politica prudentia*) and prudent men, but not for the full range of Aristotelian excellences.¹⁹ The old political virtues, in essence, begin to be replaced by a kind of political artistry. Dante agrees, for example, with Aristotle that "men of superior intellect naturally rule over others" but fails to note that this quotation from the *Politics* occurs in the context of the discussion of natural slavery. Nor does he add that for Aristotle intellectual ability was not a sufficient condition for the claim to political excellence. The rational quality by which Aristotle distinguishes free men from slaves becomes, in world empire, the principal differentiation between rulers and nonrulers. World empire does not aim at developing or teaching the Aristotelian moral virtues.

The force of intellectual qualities rather than moral virtues in determining rulers will be considered below when *De Monarchia's* emperor is considered, but the initial reason for Dante's de-emphasis of the moral vir-

corporeal substance. Whether Dante accepted that the intellect was not only independent of the body but immortal is a more difficult question, however. Moreover, it presents a serious difficulty for Christian theology and its position that individual immortality denies immortality of a substance extrinsic to individual bodies. As might be expected, the literature on this question is extensive. For a review, see Joseph F. Costanzo, "The *De Monarchia* of Dante Alighieri," *Thought*, Vol. XLIII, 1968, pp. 113-23.

¹⁸ See Alexander of Roes, *Memoriale de Prerogativa Imperii Romani*, 1281, and Engelbert of Admont, *De Ortu et Fine Rom. Imperii*, 1308, for two examples. An argument may be made that once Rome became Christian the idea of world empire was inevitable. Cf. Robert Browning, *Justinian and Theodora* (New York, 1971), p. 20.

¹⁹ *De Mon.* l.iii.10.

tues is already apparent. Whereas, for example, Aristotle assumes that potential or actual war is a perpetual facet of politics, a successful universal human community assumes continuous peace. To serve mankind's end, empire aims for that condition in which men can live together in unity and harmony, i.e. universal peace (*pax universalis*).²⁰ This replaces the Aristotelian good as a political goal.

De Monarchia implies that political activity in the world government ultimately serves an end superior to politics itself. By establishing peace, world government provides for an end—the potential human intellect—that supersedes politics. The size of world government is not the sole obstacle to the development of the Aristotelian moral virtues. That world government is directed at a suprapolitical end is also an obstacle, for it means that emphasis on the kind of virtues that assume the perpetual or eternal compulsions of politics—as, for instance, Aristotelian courage depends on the existence of war—will be undercut.²¹ No longer are men primarily political animals who face eternal political concerns. Under empire, the force of such concerns is lessened as men are unified to actualize a potential that cannot be measured or judged politically. Political activity itself does not make men good, but rather, good comes about after political activity is successfully concluded.²² In such a situation Aristotle's teaching that moral virtue is its own reward is precluded. World empire, itself the result of a Christian perspective the ancients could not know, results in a new stance with respect to political virtues. Their force is dissipated inasmuch as they can be effectuated only in a limited community and within the idea that political activity of the correct sort is worthy for its own sake.

An example of the diminution that the Aristotelian virtues suffer in the world government appears when *De Monarchia* turns to consider justice. Acknowledging the *Nicomachean Ethics* explicitly, Dante affirms Aristotle's doctrine that cupidity is a bar to justice. However, he does not mention that for Aristotle cupidity is only one of a number of obstacles to justice fully conceived. It is described as "the" obstacle:

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I.iv.2. The linking of unity and peace was a staple of medieval political thought. Cf. d'Entrèves, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²¹ The possibility of the courage of the *Nicomachean Ethics* would disappear under conditions of perpetual peace as surely as liberality in regard to possession and temperance in regard to women would disappear under communism. See *Nic. Eth.* 1115a30, *Pol.* 1263b8.

²² *De Mon.* I.viii.3, ix.1. This perception is in keeping with the Christian view of salvation, which diminishes political goods in the sense of considering them good in themselves. Gilson puts the point nicely: "As the supreme moral value Christianity replaces virtue by God, and the whole conception of the moral end is thereby transformed." *Spirit*, *op. cit.*, p. 325. Cf. Thomas, *Summa Theo.*, IIa, IIae, 145, Iad2; St. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, 38, I. Resp.

When cupidity is entirely eliminated there remains nothing opposed to justice.²³

De Monarchia ignores the fact that Aristotelian justice—in the sense of complete virtue—is distinguished by things other than the absence of greed. There is no mention of courage, temperance, good temper, or the other moral virtues. According to *De Monarchia*, it is solely in terms of “that cupidity which all too easily distorts men’s minds” that one can understand the statement from the *Rhetoric* “that nothing which can be judged by the law should ever be left to the judge’s discretion.”²⁴ And if cupidity is “the” bar to justice, so charity or rightly ordered love (*caritas seu recta dilectio*) is the quality that most distinguishes just men.²⁵ In world empire, complete justice is replaced by a particularistic virtue characterized by charity, whose correlative vice, i.e., injustice, is denoted by greed. In this sense, Aristotelian justice is very much narrowed in the world empire, although it does not disappear completely.

De Monarchia’s treatment of justice indicates that world government narrows the Aristotelian moral spectrum. It also, however, illuminates why this is necessary. Because of his comprehensive excellence, the just man within Aristotle’s meaning is set off from other men, i.e., he is an extraordinary man. As such, he is a potential bar to the unification that is the condition of the proper human end as *De Monarchia* presents it. No more than Aristotle did Dante think all men capable of justice within the full meaning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.²⁶ Yet to foster the universal human community, distinctions among men have to be lessened, which means that the considerable differences between men indicated in the *Ethics* have to be avoided. The conclusion appears inescapable. A form of justice that distinguishes the virtuous from the less virtuous or evil has to give way before a version of justice that all men can share. If world government is to unify men effectively, there will have to be provision for making them equally virtuous. Or, at least, the considerable difference between virtuous and vicious men in Aristotle will have to be alleviated. To admit only some

²³ *De Mon.* I.ix.1,11. Cf. *Nic. Eth.* 1129b24 ff., *Paradiso* XIX.21. Dante replaces justice as virtue in its entirety with the particularistic justice that applies to matters of gain (*kerdos*). *Nic. Eth.* 1130b4.

²⁴ *De Mon.* I.xi.11. Compare with *Rhetoric* 1354a24 ff. Aristotle says that one must guard against more than cupidity in a judge. Envy, anger, and pity, among other things, must also be checked. Dante could have been expected to know this. Thomas and Brunetto Latini warned against making such an error. *On Kingship*, Eschmann edition (Toronto, 1949), I,26(16); *Li Livres Dou Tresor*, Edition critique par Francis Carmody (Berkeley, 1948), II.xii, xxviii. Dante’s familiarity with such sources is supported by Charles T. Davis, “Brunetto Latini and Dante,” *Studi Medievali*, 3a Serie, VIII, 1967, p. 439, *passim*. Allan H. Gilbert, *Dante’s Conception of Justice* (Durham, N. C., 1925), pp. 3 ff.

²⁵ *De Mon.* I.xi.13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I.xv.9, III.xv.5-6,9. Cf. *Nic. Eth.* 1095a4, 1095b8 ff., 1098a31 ff.

men to justice raises a potential barrier between the just and the unjust that can check the movement toward world unity.

Making cupidity the sole obstacle to justice appreciably lessens this difficulty. For example, *De Monarchia* indicates that things that had previously been seen as sources of political division among men are insignificant. The importance that Aristotle attributed to factors such as wealth and breeding in producing men of different political interests and perspectives no longer applies in the universal world government.²⁷ Even the difference with respect to virtue between the ruler of the monarchy and his subjects is diminished. The ruler is no different in any virtuous sense from his subjects. He is just, not because he is a better man, but because there are no objects to which his greed might attach. The way in which a ruler is distinguished from his subjects will be considered below but initially it is important to recognize that he is not morally superior to them. His justice is the consequence of his office or position more than anything else. Having dominion over all men and all temporal matters, he lacks nothing. Hence, he is beyond the compulsions of cupidity. In effect, he has no choice but to be just. The monarch is the greatest example of justice because his office assures him anything that can be desired, in any politically relevant sense.

But when there is nothing to be desired there can be no cupidity, because passions cannot remain when their objects have been eliminated. But the monarch has nothing to desire, since the ocean alone is the limit of his jurisdiction . . . It follows that of all mortals the Monarch can be the purest incarnation of justice.²⁸

In this sense, establishing cupidity as the sole check upon political virtue clears the way for a new kind of politics, one in which moral differences among men are unimportant when contrasted to their similarities.

De Monarchia's demonstration that world government maximizes justice has a double force. It lowers the standards by which justice—indeed, virtue

²⁷ *Pol.* 1094a17.

²⁸ *De Mon.* I.xi.11-12. Initially, emphasizing cupidity as the passion that must be controlled in politics leads to an emphasis on the authority of the law as a control against the excesses of greed and the development of governing devices that greed cannot destroy. In this respect, Dante retains an Aristotelian stress upon the authority of law and properly constituted offices to check passion. However, he seems to move beyond Aristotle toward a view that only such institutions will provide adequate safeguards against tyranny. That is, Dante seems to prefigure the kind of emphasis on office that replaces Aristotle's emphasis on properly educating the officeholder. The way to assure justice, in the former case, is to arrange procedures whereby officeholders are limited by the offices they hold instead of by their own understanding of what is politically necessary or right. Taken to its extreme, such a view culminates in *The Federalist's* famous comment that "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition." For a comment upon this aspect of *De Monarchia*, see Kantorowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 454-56.

in general—is measured and brings virtue within a more egalitarian framework than was offered by Aristotle. Moreover, it indicates that the proper monarch is such independently of any qualification founded upon virtue. To be just, he needs only the power of his office. With such power he is free to render to his subjects without himself suffering the temptations of cupidity. In this respect, Dante seems to offer an early statement of a view that becomes more prevalent after Machiavelli, a view that equates virtue with power.

In regard to acts, the contrary of justice is to be found in limitations on power; for since justice is a virtue governing relations between people, how can it operate in practice without the power of rendering to each his due? Hence, the stronger the just man is in practice, the greater will be his justice.²⁹

By such means Dante changes the Aristotelian tradition, which was his inheritance, to conform with the Christian perspective and the political requirements of his day. A political philosophy that demands the capacities and strict habituation assumed in the Aristotelian virtues cannot rule Dante's political world. The newer version of justice fits the times in a manner in which Aristotle's virtues do not. At the least, the middle ages could supply theological and pious support for a lessened justice by way of arguments for Christian charity.³⁰ The world government retains a place for virtue, if a more constrained variety than that of the ancients. And in keeping with Christian belief, it is a virtue realizable and accessible to all.³¹ However, this new regime cannot become truly viable without a return to the classical tradition.

III

De Monarchia's position on liberty is a starting point for understanding this return. Liberty is presented as a concomitant to the peace that is world government's goal.³² Dante, therefore, takes pains to demonstrate that empire is consistent with liberty. To his most important precursors, an imperial system was practically synonymous with tyranny and, thereby,

²⁹ *De Mon.* Ixi.7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I.xi.13, II.v.5, *Inf.* VI, *Para.* III.70-87, XXVI.7-66. A model for such arguments is offered at I.i.6, where Dante suggests that men ought to pattern themselves upon the divine Giver "who gives to all liberally and upbraids none." *James I.5.* Cf. *De Mon.* III.i.3-4. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (London, 1966), Vol. 46, Ia2ae,64,4: "A root comes before what grows from it... charity is the root of all virtues." J. E. Parsons, Jr. notes the force of charity as a theological virtue as regards La Rochefoucauld in a manner that seems very much to reflect Dante's usage, "On La Rochefoucauld", *Interpretation*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Winter, 1971, pp. 134-35.

³¹ D'Entrèves, therefore, refers to Dante's "optimism," *op. cit.*, pp. 16, 57, and Gilson speaks of the optimistic viewpoint of medieval Christianity in general, *Spirit*, *op. cit.*, pp. 109 ff.

³² *De Mon.*, I.xii.1 ff, II.i.5, v.5. Cf. *Pol.* 1313a38 ff., 1284bl.

with the lack of freedom. Aristotle portrayed Persia as the very model of a tyranny. Potential tyrants, according to his view, could do little better than study "Persian and barbaric" methods to learn how best to tyrannize. Christian arguments were quite as direct on the same point. Whatever the differences in Augustinian and Thomistic perspectives, they agreed that empires tended irrevocably toward tyranny.³³ Essentially, conventional Christians held that empire could be only by force and, hence, denied freedom. Dante himself, in fact, informs us that he accepted this position until his "mind's eye" penetrated to the truth.³⁴

Given the weight of previous testimony on the question of the relationship of empire and liberty, Dante must establish that liberty and empire are not mutually exclusive.³⁵ The alternative is to admit that world government and freedom are contradictory. This course is unacceptable inasmuch as freedom is essential for the realization of mankind's potential. Whereas men need the most complete or comprehensive unity to achieve the genus' end, tyranny is successful when it prohibits men from becoming close to one another, i.e., by keeping them in any serious sense from knowing or being friendly with one another.³⁶ The goal of tyranny is to isolate men from one another—today we speak of alienation—in order to create the proper kind of submissiveness in them. Under such circumstances, unity and, hence, mankind's end would be impossible. Dante makes clear that the kind of activity by which men are at their best demands liberty. As it is in speculative activity that human intellect achieves its highest possibility, slavery is unacceptable inasmuch as slaves may be denied the opportunity for speculation. Liberty is the necessary condition of the highest human good. And like that good, liberty is a divine gift to man.

Both [acting and making] are subordinate to speculation (*omnia speculationi ancilantur*) as the highest function (*tanquam optimo*) for the sake of which the Supreme Goodness (*Prima Bonitas*) brought mankind into being.

... this liberty, or this principle of all our liberty, is God's most precious gift to human nature, for by it we are made happy here as men, and happy as gods

³³ *De Civ. Dei* V.12, *On Kingship*, IV.33. One is tempted to suggest that Thomas' avoidance of any proposal or suggestion for empire is the consequence of this concern, which may also have been true of Marsilius. *On Kingship*, I.14, 16, 25, 26; *The Defender of Peace*, I.XVII.10. Cf. Strauss, *op. cit.*, p. 242. For medieval men, of course, Rome was the imperial model.

³⁴ *De Mon.* II.i.3, iii.1. Cf. *Conv.* V.iv. The position was consistent with the Christian view that all states have a sinful origin. For the views of Dante's contemporaries, see Gierke, *op. cit.*, 109-10.

³⁵ *De Mon.* I.iii.9. III.xv.11. Compare with *On Kingship*, I.10, *In Lib. Pol.*, Lib. III, Lect. 5-6. See Davis, *Dante and the idea of Rome*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28 ff., Renucci, *op. cit.*, 295 ff.

³⁶ Aristotle says a tyrant "must take every means to prevent people from knowing one another." *Pol.* 1313b4. In tyrannies, he says, "there is little or no friendship." *Nic. Eth.* 1161a31.

in the beyond. In which case who would not agree that mankind is at its best when it is able to make fullest use of this principle.³⁷

By the divine gift of liberty, therefore, men achieve their speculative goal. If Dante establishes the primacy of speculation by other than Aristotelian means, he still provides freedom for the most Aristotelian of purposes, in order that unhindered men can attain the best human end.³⁸ Moreover, Dante not only agrees with Aristotle on the hierarchy of human ends, he also follows Aristotle in defining freedom. After the *Metaphysics*, it is described as self-dependence rather than dependence upon others. True forms of government aim at freedom and "intend men to go on living for their own sakes."³⁹

For such reasons, *De Monarchia* attempts to wed the unlimited political power of the world empire to freedom. It must accomplish this if God's intention is to be carried out and Aristotle's highest human activity is to be preserved. Whether the divine intention, as Dante presents it, and Aristotelian contemplation are the same remains a problem, but that freedom is necessary for both is unquestionable.

Assurance of freedom in the world empire rests upon the proposition that world empire will be properly ruled. Its ruler—the emperor or monarch—will not tend to be a tyrant. He will preserve freedom for reasons inherent in his position and because of his own qualities. As already noted, his office makes him just. His subjects need not fear that they will lose their liberty because of his greed. Proper governmental form, in other words, is the necessary and sufficient condition of justice in the monarch. By the nature of his position he is independent and has all that he can temporarily desire. However, *De Monarchia* demonstrates that it is necessary that the monarch bring to his office qualities that office itself cannot provide. The jurisdiction of the monarch is automatic, but the judgment that assures that he uses his jurisdiction for the cause of liberty does not go with his office.⁴⁰ It must be developed.

³⁷ *De Mon.* I.iii.10, xii.6.

³⁸ *Nic. Eth.* 1177b23 ff.

³⁹ *De Mon.* I.xii.8-10. Cf. *Meta.* 982b25, *Purg.* I.71-72, *Para.* XXXI.85-89. With Aristotle, Dante understands that good types of regimes aim at freedom and "perverted" types tend toward slavery. What is crucial to his formulation—and removes him from any list of purely modern thinkers—is that self-interest is not limited to bodily or wholly temporal concerns. Cf. *De Mon.* III.xiii.3, 9, *Purg.* XVI.33, *Pol.* 1277a20 ff., Kantorowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 491 ff.

⁴⁰ *De Mon.* I.xiii.3, 6, 7, III.x.10. An understanding of the relationship between the monarch and his kingdom is dependent, once again, on recognizing how Dante borrows from the *Metaphysics*. Dante's demonstration depends on the proposition that the monarch is already what he is trying to produce in others. That is, the relationship between emperor and subjects is essentially the relationship between what is already in act (*per tale existens actu*) and what is potentially (*potentia*). At the political level, this means that the monarch personifies the qualities his

It is at this point that Dante's earlier identification of superior intellect with ruling ability is borne home. Rational judgment more than anything else characterizes the good ruler as such. It enables him to correctly assume and use his position. Judgment makes world government a reality, for judgment enables the potential monarch to properly form or found his regime. The justice that is associated with his office comes about only after the world government is a reality. Judgment in the ruler, in this respect, precedes justice. To this end, Dante repeats the words of David:

And these two qualities [judgment and justice] are those supremely fitting for the person who makes and carries out the law, as was maintained by that most holy king when he implored God to grant the things most essential for a king and his son: "God," he said, "give to the king your judgment and to the king's son justice."⁴¹

Whereas the specific quality of the father-king is identified with judgment, the quality of the son-king can be justice. Judgment is a prerequisite for the monarch and is anterior to any other ruling qualities in him.

In turn, judgment enables monarchs to wield their enormous political power without destroying freedom. Dante argues that intelligent monarchs must recognize the human diversity existing within the homogeneity of the genus and make determinations consistent with both. Their success, in fact, depends on such ability. They cannot hope, given the extent of their dominions and the differences among their subjects, personally to control every transaction or to legislate for every occurrence. They can, however, legislate in a way that is generally binding yet leaves leeway for expression of relevant differences. The formulations of monarchs, in other words, are universally binding but do not necessarily punish the idiosyncratic or uncommon.⁴² Universal law, which world government demands, does not exceed certain limits. Dante recalls, for example, how Moses legislated for the tribes of Israel, supplying unifying doctrines but allowing individual chiefs to rule in regard to the individual needs of each tribe. By such methods the monarchy is strengthened, rulers reign supreme, and allowance is made for freedom. Thus indivisible and powerful rule is shown to be consistent with the political latitude that natural diversity and particularistic needs require.⁴³ In current terms—and foreshadowing later developments in political thought—centralized rule and decentralized

regime is to produce—freedom, justice, and judgment. At the same time, however, it becomes difficult to understand how the monarch is one of that race whose end he serves. Compare, for example, *De Mon.* I.xiii.3 with *Meta.* 1049b24.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, I.xiii.7. Cf. *Psalms* LXXXII.1, *Inf.* X.6.

⁴² *Ibid.*, I.xiv.4-5. Cf. *Conv.* IV.xi, *Para.* VIII.99 ff., 150 ff. The reader will recall that the universal human end does not deny the human race's "multitudinous variety." Cf. *De Mon.* I.iii.4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, I.xiv.9. This argument is most effective when Dante engages those canon lawyers, the Decretalists, who sought to support ecclesiastical claims by way of church traditions, III.iii.9. Church traditions, as the Decretalists presented them,

administration are the marks of the properly constituted world government and help it avoid the tendency toward tyranny of which earlier empires had been accused. But it must be emphasized that the entire structure might founder if emperors or monarchs are insufficiently skillful or inadequate judges.

Above all, monarchs must understand that rule ought not to be divided. This is crucial to their success. It was precisely because of an insufficiency of that understanding, Dante argues, that contemporary politics were in such disarray. This idea, and the concomitant notion that men's political loyalties not be divided, lay at the heart of *De Monarchia's* denial of the church's power in politics and its final return to the classical tradition to support the monarchy. So long, Dante begins, as rule is undivided and a ruling hierarchy is recognized, there can be political peace and harmony in the world. He finds support for this position in both classical and Christian authorities.⁴⁴ Yet he notes how the rise of Christianity and church interference in politics led to the demise of such political requirements.

Prior to Christian influence there had been the perfect monarchy (*Monarchia perfecta*) of Augustinian Rome, under whose centralized and undivided rule men had been peaceful and happy. When that empire fell, men lost their intellectual, practical, and even divine bearings. The reason for Rome's collapse was the same ecclesiastical cupidity that Dante has already identified with his Christian opponents.⁴⁵ In other words, Christian

did not have the flexibility needed to deal with the fluctuations of political life, cf. *Para.* IX.133-35. The Rev. Henry Francis Cary, a nineteenth-century Dante scholar, engagingly suggests that the Church of England handled this problem better than the Church of Rome. To this end, he cites the following article (XXXIV) of the Church of England: "It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly alike; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's will." Cary's comment is included in his translation of *Purgatory and Paradise* (New York, 1883), p. 217.

⁴⁴ *De Mon.* I.v.3-4, 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, I.xvi.1-5, *Para.* VI.10,80-81, *Conv.* IV.v.8., Kantorowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 465. The distinction between pagan antiquity and Christian times is indicated by the choice of Augustinian Rome as a model of harmony and well-being. This period of the empire was neither in size nor strength the greatest period of Roman rule. Moreover, Dante singles out emperors other than Augustus—notably Justinian and Trajan—for especial praise in other places. What distinguishes Augustinian Rome for *De Monarchia's* purposes is that it is the last empire of pre-Christian times. Cf. *Para.* VI.10-12, Davis, *Dante and the idea of Rome*, *op. cit.*, p. 37, P. Toynbee, *Dante Dictionary*, (Oxford, 1968), pp. 168-69. Dante speaks of the "seamless garment" of empire being rent on "the nail of cupidity." This is a reference to the Donation of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor (274-337), who was supposed to have given Pope Sylvester I vast secular powers. The document that supported the Donation was proven spurious in 1440 but was still accepted by imperialists and papalists as genuine in Dante's time.

cupidity brought to an end the best of human times and still, according to *De Monarchia*, constitutes a considerable problem. Thus only restoration of strong and unified rule, free of churchmen's interference and greed, can approximate a return to conditions prior to the advent of Christianity. *De Monarchia's* emphasis upon controlling cupidity and restoring powerful rule rather than reinstating moral virtues is partially explained, therefore, by the conditions of the times, which are themselves consequent to the influence of Christianity.

Given this situation, the standard for proper rule must necessarily be a pre-Christian empire. Only there could a successful model for the new world government be found. The particular model, as already suggested, is pagan Rome.⁴⁶ By arguing in defense of the proposition that Rome's empire was rightful, *De Monarchia* demonstrates that imperial rule is the best kind of rule and offers a standard against which subsequent rulers can measure themselves. But there is no suggestion that there can be a simple return to pagan times or that Christian influence in politics can be ignored. The problem is to understand how in Christian times one can return or approximate a return to the political unity that characterized pre-Christian times. What pagan characteristics, in other words, are desirable and practical in a Christian political world? The answer leads us back to Roman and pre-Roman political ideas. Indeed, it leads us back to Aristotle.

The Roman people, Dante explains, were entitled to imperial office because they were the "noblest people."⁴⁷ Their nobility is to be understood in two senses. First, *De Monarchia* borrows from Aristotle the idea that "nobility is virtue and ancient wealth." This is then tied to the idea that "nobility of mind (*animi*) is the one and only virtue," which Dante attributes to Juvenal.⁴⁸ Nobility is, therefore, related to both the intellectual quality and the ancestry of the Romans. Further support for both of these ideas will be forthcoming, but initially one ought to remember that the passage in the *Politics* from which Dante borrows points to the fact that

⁴⁶ Dante's choice of Rome as a model still sparks scholarly debate. Views range from a Christian perspective, which understands the choice as an attempt to show divine providence at work, to the idea that Rome is used as the herald of a new Italian nationalism. Cf. Renucci, *op. cit.*, p. 311; Reade, *op. cit.*, pp. xx ff.

⁴⁷ *De Mon.* II.iii.3, *Para.* VI.34 ff. The argument reinforces a point already noted. Roman nobility warrants Roman rule, we are told, because "honour is the reward of virtue." Thus the Aristotelian idea that virtue is its own reward is precluded. The virtuous are to expect and are satisfied to be paid with political honor. As a consequence, the magnanimous man, who is disrespectful of political honor, seems like the totally just man to have no place in the new political order. *Nic. Eth.* 1124a4 ff., H. V. Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism* (Chicago, 1952), pp. 116 ff., Gilson, *Spirit, op. cit.*, p. 387.

⁴⁸ *De Mon.* II.iii.4. Dante reproduces both of these definitions in forms that change the original. He substitutes nobility for good birth in the statement from the *Politics* and adds *animi* to Juvenal's definition. *Pol.* 1294a21, *Saturnalia* VIII.20; cf. *Conv.* IV.iii.6, Davis, *Brunetto Latini, op. cit.*, p. 436.

ancient wealth and virtue are somehow synonymous with "good birth."

This dual view of nobility is supported by other ancient authorities. Virgil, in particular, is shown to testify to it. Aeneas is the exemplar of nobility thus defined. He is founder of Rome, ancestor of a people who are ennobled by relation to him, and ancestral source of the qualities that led to Roman hegemony over the entire world. Furthermore, the means by which he founded Rome demonstrate his own nobility "of mind." His success is offered as a result of his three clever marriages and his warlike arts as much as of his paternity. He characterizes the ability of the best or "noblest" ruler to strengthen his hold on places where he already has ancestral claim and conquer where he does not.⁴⁹ Ancestry is indivisible from nobility properly understood but it does not limit men who would further imperial domains by way of their individual capabilities. And since empire is by definition the best regime and aims at the common good, whatever rulers do to further its strength and dominions is right.⁵⁰

As the exemplar of nobility, Aeneas is a guide to future monarchs. More than that, his actions reveal how one may recognize the proper ruler or monarch. No longer, in the new system of world government, would ecclesiastical authorities have responsibility for approving monarchs and thereby legitimating them. Dante's denial of papal political authority means that proper rulers and proper claims to authority must be recognizable without recourse to the church. Thus *De Monarchia* introduces its audience to an idea of political right that bypasses papal claims to plenitude of power by demonstrating that rightful rulers can be determined by information that all men possess. That is, "noble" men are recognizable without the divine or particularistic knowledge upon which papal claims to political authority were ultimately based.

Aeneas' actions and his success indicate that men who are superior in political affairs emerge by way of their own resources. They do not depend upon the acclamation of fellows or of any particular group, i.e., the priesthood. Monarchs do not depend upon others for office. They earn it themselves. Ecclesiastical views of higher or natural law, upon which papal claims to political authority are anchored, give way in this respect to a view of nature in which men receive no express political directives from a superior nature.⁵¹ Political excellence is not revealed by higher laws. If God, by nature, which is the "instrument of divine art," ordains a people to rule, He does not do so by a clear or overt commandment. With Aris-

⁴⁹ *De Mon.* II.iii.8-17. Dante takes liberties with Virgil, especially in regard to Aeneas' marriages. An interesting commentary on some of these liberties is provided by Renucci, *op. cit.*, p. 283. I would like to thank John O'Connell who showed me a number of places in which Dante changes Virgil.

⁵⁰ In effect, the argument is that the rightful monarch has everything. Thus his acts are free of greed and just. He has no recourse but to act for the public welfare. *De Mon.* II.v.8 ff., 25-26.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, II.ii.3, III.xiii.3, 9.

tole, Dante agrees that political excellence is displayed in activity. Rome's right to rule was not established by commandments and appears independent of revelation. It is established by what Aeneas and his successors did. This diverges from ecclesiastical doctrine and is a measure of the lengths to which Dante would go to break the church's influence in political matters. To say that political right is displayed in activity, not by natural or divine commandment, is to say that the church or Scripture does not control political affairs and that Scripture does not support temporal claims to power.

Claims to temporal authority are only supported, then, when those who have ruling qualities or potentials actually exercise their qualities in political matters. Potential rulers bear personal responsibility for making their virtues known through their actions. Ancestry or intelligence does not alone justify imperial ambition. There must also be the will to act. True emperors display their abilities in active political competition. Thus, while Roman power, stealth, and nobility may ultimately have been divine, they were all manifested in temporal politics in a way that men could recognize. Indeed, given that they led to Roman victory and empire, men could hardly resist them.⁵² Divine intervention notwithstanding, Dante's political teaching demonstrates that right to rule is visible without recourse to revelation or to other sorts of divine knowledge. Temporal politics are to be controlled by other than scriptural or ecclesiastical traditions.⁵³ Legitimate rule in the world government is determined by active performance.

There are, then, no sacred rulers for Dante. Short of absolute monarchy, he saw the world as continually beset by struggles for control. The struggles would be resolved only when a rightful monarch arose from the political arena. This theory of what *De Monarchia* refers to as the temporal duel (*duellum*) is the principal thesis of the treatise with respect to questions of political right.⁵⁴ Again, Dante's novelty is evident as he suggests an independent temporal political order whose ruler is author of his own legitimacy by force of his own actions. Such was the result of emphasizing unity of rule as a check upon church interference in politics.

Neither the *duellum* nor the monarch's "nobility of mind" explains fully how the old Roman unity is to be approximated, however. That is, recognition of the manner in which empire arises and the personal quality of its ruler does not reveal how such an association will operate. To understand this, the portion of Roman nobility related to ancestry must be recalled. Ultimately, a viable empire is as dependent upon a proper political stance toward ancestry as upon "quality of mind." Roman strength and unity were a consequence, at least in part, of its tradition of ancestral piety. This is the pagan lesson that *De Monarchia* adopts and

⁵² *Ibid.*, II.vi.9, vii.3, 9. Cf. Renucci, *op. cit.*, pp. 289 ff.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, II.vii.4-5, III.iii.9, iv.1-2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II.ix.21, II.vii.9, viii.11-15, ix.3.

that allows one seriously to consider reinstating world government in a Christian setting.

Whether the positive features of pagan ancestral piety can be reasserted in a Christian context is a key question for *De Monarchia* and signifies an important return to classical political thinking. In order to answer the question satisfactorily, Dante attempts the difficult course of criticizing the church without compromising the proper kind of piety and reverence. His argument against the church, he tells us, is informed by Augustine's admonition that "faith will waver if the authority of the sacred scriptures is shaken."⁵⁵ Such wavering is politically dangerous, for political unity depends upon support that proper faith offers. The fact is that empire may generate its own power, but in a Christian world it cannot operate successfully but through an alliance with religious authorities. In a Christian world—indeed, in any world—piety is a politically relevant quality. Because of this, *De Monarchia* at the same time emphasizes the power of faith and de-emphasizes the church's temporal role. Since world government exists within a Christian setting, one must learn how to use the power of faith politically.⁵⁶

This begins to explain why *De Monarchia* relates ancestry to nobility. The divisiveness and irresolution that Christianity brought to politics were in a serious sense a result of the fact that Christianity sundered the ties between the pagan political community and its gods. Somehow, these ties must be restored in a Christian context. Ancestral piety points in the proper direction inasmuch as it points to unifying rather than divisive piety, in a political sense. Dante's ecclesiastical opponents, on the other hand, cannot heal the breach between the community and its gods because they are blind to the political necessity for doing so. The qualities that make them defenders of the church are described in *De Monarchia* as zeal, greed, or unthinking faith. None of these lead them to an understanding of political necessity, which is available only to natural reason. Dante does not spare the papalists. Their concerns, he says, are politically unenlightening. Thus, in demonstrating that monarchs receive their power independently of papal authority, *De Monarchia* posits the irrationality of ecclesiastical arguments. Ecclesiastical help in determining political need is not forthcoming because reason is not the ecclesiastical milieu.

It is always the case with men whose will runs ahead of their rational insight that their affections become perverted through their having put the light of reason behind them, and they are then drawn along by these affections like blind men who obstinately deny their blindness.⁵⁷

St. Peter himself, the argument continues, typifies the fault. Dante does not

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, III.ii.3, iii.3,18, iv.9. *De Doctrina Christiana* I.36. ff.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, III,iv.18, 21, vi.7. Cf. *Purg.* XVI.127, *Para.* II.43-46.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, III.iii.3-4, III.i.1. The ignorant faithful are the Decretalists—who claim that faith is based upon the traditions of the church. Cf. III.iii.6-10.

hesitate to describe the first of the papal line as a man of "archimandrite's naivety," i.e., a man of simple purity and faith rather than thoughtfulness.⁵⁸ The endeavors of him and his line blind them to political necessity. Thus *De Monarchia* leads us away from churchmen to an old pagan notion of ancestral piety in order to understand what world government needs to support it.

De Monarchia's stress on a proper respect for ancestry is necessary because of the political consequences of Christianity's success. Christianity divided the political world as it existed for the ancients by destroying pagan faith. The old gods, which had tied fathers to sons and both to their political regimes, had fallen in favor of a faith whose promises were independent of ancestral patriotism. In other words, Christianity destroyed political unity by destroying ancestral ties upon which that unity had been founded. Its impact had to be understood in terms of Christ's own words.

Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth; I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father.⁵⁹

Politically, the discord resulting from Christianity is of the worst variety for it divides fathers and sons and thereby strikes at the heart of political unity. World government is to heal this breach by reunifying men through the proper type of filial piety and reverence. Somehow, one's faith in one's own ancestors must not be compromised by Christian faith. To this end, Dante issues his challenge to the zealous by recalling his human paternity while reiterating his Christian reverence.

... trusting in that piety which a reverent son owes to his father, which a reverent son owes to his mother, full moreover of reverence for the Church and reverence for its pastor, as well as for all who profess the Christian faith.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, III.viii.9, ix.9,17. An archimandrite, in the Greek church, was the head of a number of monasteries. In other places, Dante applies the title to St. Francis and the pope. *Para.* XI.99, *Epistle* XI.13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, III.ix.18, *Matt.* X.34-5. The full passage is:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father,
and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Dante also notes how the church weakened older traditions, including that of seniority by birth. Cf. I.v.5, III.iii.13, 17, v.4. *Inf.* XXII, XXVIII, *Purg.* XVI, *Para.* IX.126. Strauss, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

⁶⁰ *De Mon.* III.iii.18, I.ix.1, III.xv.18. The papalist argument against the bequeathing of ancestral virtue was basically that since we are all descended from the

Proper recognition of the ancestral portion of nobility, in this manner, returns us to *De Monarchia's* opening admonition to remember our ancestors. World government is designed to restore civil unity by reuniting fathers and sons. Empire reinstates the concept of father and fatherland that was exemplified by Aeneas and Rome. Acceptance of a universally realized human end forces men to reconsider and reassert their closeness to their forebears and their fellows. Papal antagonism to *De Monarchia* is not without cause even if the question of Averroism is avoided. The reverent unity of antiquity that *De Monarchia* would restore is doctrinally—"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me"—as well as politically dangerous.

De Monarchia's reverential beginning continues as a theme throughout the entire treatise. It is a key to understanding how Dante is faithful to the Aristotelian political tradition. It is Aristotle to whom Dante turns for support when explaining and arguing for the force of ancestral respect in political affairs. Aristotle, reinforced by the Roman example, teaches that sons have to remember and respect their human paternity, that human law makes men good on earth, that men must properly appreciate the grants and gifts that comprise their patrimony, and finally, that men should be ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their country and their fathers.⁶¹ That portion of the classical tradition directed at developing political dutifulness and reverence is of the utmost importance if the new political order is to be effective. Thus, as Dante left Aristotle to solve problems that Aristotle had not had to confront, so he returns to Aristotle to explain and support his solutions. While the ancient world cannot be reinstated, its understanding of politics supplies an invaluable perspective in the modern age.

The anti-ecclesiastical elements of *De Monarchia* reflect the Aristotelian view of political reality, therefore, without any attempt to reinstate the Aristotelian *polis*. The impact of Christianity denied the latter course. Yet Dante still respects and honors intellectual and contemplative activity in a Christian setting.⁶² His new political proposal retains a place for the intellect while respecting the power and place of faith. To establish peace and assuage human cupidity, laws with teeth are needed, but these laws and the authority of the monarch are not necessarily antithetical to liberty and philosophy. Temporal monarchy provides the "bit and rein" needed to assure that classical values will not altogether disappear as a result of

same father and mother, no particular ancestral ties can distinguish any man or group from any other. Davis notes some of the sources to which Dante had access with respect to this argument, *Brunetto Latini, op. cit.*, pp. 437 ff. What Davis does not seem to realize is the strength of Dante's argument against this position.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, I.xi.1, xv.9, II.v.5, vii.2-3, III.x.13. Dante specifically refers to the following in these passages; *Physics* 194b13, *Nic. Eth.* 1179b31 ff., *Pol.* 1253a25, *Nic. Eth.* 1094b9, 1120a14.

⁶² *Ibid.*, III.xv.7-9.

medieval license. As Dante presents it, it is the only possible cure, which does not sacrifice conditions necessary for the pursuit of the best human goods, for the divisiveness that resulted from Christianity. In a Christian world, Dante retains respect for eternal and divine questions. His reverence is that of a man reverential to the power of intellectual matters and to the power of reverence itself. Thus, the conclusion of *De Monarchia* echoes its opening:

Caesar, therefore, is obliged to observe the reverence towards Peter which a first-born son owes to his father; so that when he is enlightened by the light of paternal grace he may the more powerfully enlighten the world, at the head of which he has been placed by the One who alone is ruler of all things spiritual and temporal.⁶³

The proper reverence is necessary for spiritual and temporal concerns. It is applicable both to intellectual and practical matters. It was left for later writers to degrade reverence for divine and eternal concerns and raise a political order in which sons would rule on the basis of power alone, and where power would be the only legitimate object of veneration. Perhaps they thought that Dante was too optimistic and that ancestral piety was no longer possible in the modern world. That, however, is another question.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, III.xv.10. Compare with Gierke, *op. cit.*, notes 22-23, pp. 113-15.